THE 1956–1957 INVASION OF THREE-TOED WOODPECKERS

BY J. DAVID WEST AND J. MURRAY SPEIRS

The fall-winter period of 1956-1957 was highlighted by a major flight of Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers (*Picoides arcticus*) and Northern Three-toed Woodpeckers (*Picoides tridactylus*) into southeastern Canada and northeastern United States. Southern Ontario and New England were the principal regions involved, although reports were received from an area extending from Minnesota to the Maritime provinces. The flight was undoubtedly the heaviest on record, at least for southern Ontario, where many observers saw one or both of these usually rare birds for the first time.

Prior to 1956, in southern Ontario, individual Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers had been noted in the Toronto region nearly every winter. Minor flights, involving perhaps half a dozen birds, had occurred during a few winters. The Northern Three-toed Woodpecker had been reported from the Toronto region only twice prior to the winter of 1956–57. A bird collected in November, 1901, at Well's Hill is in the Royal Ontario Museum; and a second was seen by R. H. Ivor at Erindale on November 17, 1942.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We thank all who assisted with records and other information for this paper, and particularly Mrs. Ruth P. Emery, of Boston, Massachusetts, and Mr. James L. Baillie, of Toronto, Ontario, for New England records and for Toronto and Ontario records, respectively. Others who assisted materially were Dr. W. Earl Godfrey, of Ottawa, Ontario; Dr. W. W. H. Gunn, of Toronto, Ontario; Mr. Fred T. Hall, of Buffalo, New York; Mr. Peter J. Hamel, of Hamilton, Ontario; Mr. Christopher M. Packard, of Brunswick, Maine; Mr. Frank R. Pammett, of Peterborough, Ontario; Mr. Chandler S. Robbins, of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, Maryland; and Abbé René Tanguay, of St. Anne de la Pocatière, Quebec.

FLIGHT OF NORTHERN THREE-TOED WOODPECKERS

No fewer than eight of these rare woodpeckers were reported from the Toronto region during the winter of 1956–57. The first was found on November 11 at West Hill, scaling the outer bark from the upper branches of a huge elm tree by the side of Highland Creek. A Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker was working over the same tree, and several observers had the good fortune of seeing both at work side by side. Another which attracted much attention turned up at Glendon Hall, an estate willed to the University of Toronto and within 15-minutes driving time of the main campus. A fine male, discovered at Agincourt on December 30, remained for several weeks, was seen by many observers, and was much photographed. It was subsequently caught by R. R. Taylor, banded, and released.

Most of the reports of the Northern Three-toed Woodpecker in New England were from within its regular range in Maine. However, three were seen in Massachusetts: a pair at Rowley between January 28 and March 31; and a single bird at Milton, in the Boston area, on May 7, one of the late records of this species.

A female Northern Three-toed Woodpeeker was seen on December 27, at Genessee Valley Park in New York State. The same bird, possibly, was seen again at Winslow Road, two miles away, on May 11, 1957. This species is decidedly rare in New York State. At Ithaea, it has been observed only once or twice in the past 50 years. A pair was recorded at Raquette, in northern New York, excavating in a spruce on June 10, 1957.

The only report from Miehigan was of a specimen collected in the Upper Peninsula in early February, the first taken in the state in many years.

Eight records of this species were received from Quebec, between November 1 (at St. Foy) and May 20 (at Giffard). Both localities mentioned are in the Quebec City area.

From the whole region considered in this report, a total of 59 records of the Northern Three-toed Woodpecker was received (Table 1; Fig. 1). Of these, 28 were from Ontario, only one of which was from within its regular range. There were 16 records from New England, of which four were outside its regular range. The earliest report was on October 28 at Kingston, Ontario, and the latest on June 20 at Pinery Park, Lambton County, in southwestern Ontario.

Seven Northern Three-toed Woodpeekers were reported on the 1956 Christmas counts.

FLIGHT OF BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKERS

About five Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers were reported for every Northern Three-toed Woodpecker. The total was 293 (compared with 59 Northern), of which 114 were from Ontario and 98 from New England. (See Table 2 and Fig. 2.) There were 32 reports from Quebec, two from New Brunswick, and one from Nova Scotia. New York State had 38 reports, and single birds were reported from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota. Illinois and Wisconsin each reported two, and three reports came from Michigan.

The most southerly records are from Culver's Gap, New Jersey, where one was reported on October 22; Point Pelee, Ontario, October 27; Rockford, Illinois, December 9; Pymatuning Reservoir, March 23 (the first record for western Pennsylvania), and Mill Neek, Long Island, in mid-February. The two seen in Wiseonsin, one on October 28 and the other on November 25, were the first reported to the Wiseonsin Society for Ornithology since 1951.

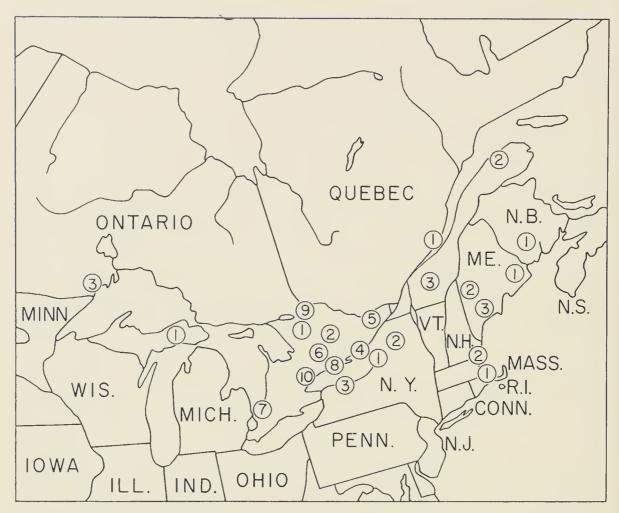


Fig. 1. Records of the Northern Three-toed Woodpecker. Places or areas in each state or province from which records were received are numbered and are listed chronologically in Table 1.

The earliest report received was from Ste. Felicité, Quebec, where a family group of five was seen on August 8, 1956. This, however, was prior to the flight proper, which was first noted (also in Quebec) at Quebec City, where one was seen on September 8 and two on September 22. Another early September report was from Brier Island, Nova Scotia, where a female was banded by Harrison F. Lewis.

The first Ontario report, on September 25 at Barrie, was followed by reports from Commanda, Toronto, and Kingston, in early October. Numerous observations followed, up to early December; they then tapered off sharply, but birds were reported every month up to June 2, at Pickering, in the Toronto area.

The first New England record was at Monhegan Island, Maine, on September 26. On September 29, a specimen was found dead at Haverhill, the first record of this flight for Massachusetts. Of a total of 56 records received from this state, most were in the eastern section. One of the Massachusetts birds

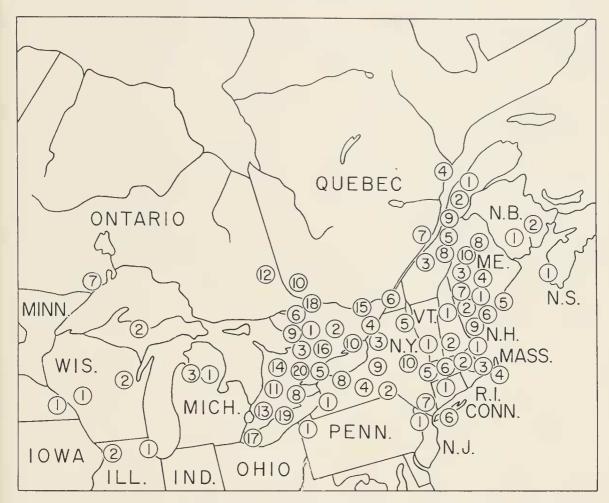


Fig. 2. Records of the Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker. Places or areas in each state or province from which records were received are numbered and are listed chronologically in Table 2.

was reported from Nantucket, 30 miles off the southeast coast. A bird at Hyde Park, south of Boston, on August 10, 1957, apparently was a left-over from the flight. This was the latest report received from any locality in the flight area. Previously, a major New England flight occurred in the years 1923–1926. Only five records of the species were obtained in the intervening years by the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

The first New York State report was on October 11 at Chenango Valley State Park, and the first for western New York, at Wilson on October 20. Thirty-eight reports were obtained from New York, the Genessee Valley region being the most productive. The normal occurrence of this species at Rochester is one bird every five to ten years.

Thirty-one Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers were reported on Christ-mas counts, including eight at Toronto and five at Rochester.

A great many of the reports stated that individuals of both species were seen on elm trees. In the Toronto region they worked over the elms as high up as scaly bark was available. This they chipped off, revealing the fawn-colored inner bark. The report from Buffalo, New York, suggested that the attraction may have been the *Scolytus* beetle, a vector of Dutch elm disease.

The heavy flight of Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers of 1923–24 in New England was fully reported by Josselyn Van Tyne (1926. Auk, 43:469–474). He attributed it to a big population built up in eastern Canada and Maine, resulting in part at least from the activities of the spruce budworm, which had devastated large areas in those regions between the years 1909–1914. Subsequent tree mortality was heavy and was apparent as late as 1924. The dead trees provided ideal conditions for bark beetles and borers, upon a diet of which the three-toed woodpeckers flourished and increased.

The disastrous forest fires of 1955 may have been a contributing factor in bringing about the 1956–1957 flight.

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| R KECORDS | Nt Observers (Sex | | 88 5 | $t \ al.$ | | 1 | Seamen, et al. (Audubon Field Notes, Aug., 2 | | 1 2 1 1 2 1 | |
| NORTHERN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER KECORDS | Obs | A. E. Davis | Emery Emery Townsend | Emery Charles Ewing Mrs. C. de Windt, et al. fide Ruth P. Emery | Robert S. Butsch | W. A. Squires | Allen Roberta Seamen, <i>et</i> 1957) | Muchmore, et al. Starling, Bruner | G. Gibson R. J. Rutter C. N. Ireson | D. E. Scovell D. E. Scovell |
| NORTHERN TH | Date | March 1 | Nov. 11 Nov. 12 Feb. 26 | Nov. 10 May 7 Jan. 28–30 Feb. 2–March 31 | Feb. 3 | Nov. 2 | March 10 June 10 | Dec. 27–March May 11 | Nov. 3 Dec. 23 Jan. 3 | Jan. 13 Feb. 9 |
| | Locality | Maine Charlotte | Franklin County Langton Township Eustis | Sidney Massachusetts Milton Rowley | Michigan Luce County McMillan Township | New Brunswick Fredericton | New York Fisher's Landing Raquette | Rochester area Genessee Valley Park Winslow Road | Ontario Algonquin Park area Lake Sasajewan Huntsville Bella Lake | Bancroft area McGarry's Creek Bancroft |
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| Table 1 (Continued) | Observers | Keith Denis | Arthur Bell Alden Strong | acc. to W. Earl Godfrey W. Earl Godfrey | R. K. Baker. F. R. Pammett R. K. Baker. R. K. Baker, F. R. Pammett, D. Sadler R. K. Baker, F. R. Pammett R. K. Baker | Dr. Keith Reynolds, et al. | R. Burness fide P. Landry | Louise de Kiriline Lawrence | G. Fairfield W. Campbell D. Bryant, E. Waltho, L. Hughes G. Page, R. Wilson Mrs. L. McDougall W. Martin W. Hough J. L. Baillie, et al. | Gaston LePagc acc. to René Tanguay acc. to René Tanguay Benoit Asselin | Frère Charles-Aimé L. M. Terrill |
| TAB | Date | Dec. 30 | Oct. 28 Nov. 10 | Late Nov. Dec. 2 | Nov. 3 Nov. 18 Dec. 26 Feb. 17 April 21 | June 20 | Early Dec. ca. Dec. 25 | May 16-June 10 | Nov. 11 Nov. 11 Nov. 17 Dec. 20 Dec. 23 Dec. 25 Dec. 30 | Nov. 1–4 Nov. 13 Dec. 11 May 20 | April 6 March 22 |
| | Locality | Fort William | Kingston area Kingston Bedford Mills | Ottawa area Ottawa Almonte | Peterborough area | Pinery Park, Lambton County | Port Hope area Port Hope Canton | Rutherglen | Toronto area Highland Creek Ajax Glendon Hall Agincourt Port Credit Scarboro Donalda Agincourt | QUEBEC Quebec City area Ste. Foy Cape Tourmente Valcartier Giffard | Ste. Anne des Monts Ulverton |
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TABLE 2
BLACK-BACKED THREE-TOED WOODPECKER RECORDS

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| DEACH PACKED THINEF-TOED WOODI ECKEN ACCOUNTS | Observers (5 | C. Bartow (Audubon Field Notes, Feb., 1957) Edwin Austin Dr. Whittles Dr. Whittles fide Mrs. Mary French, et al. Edwin Austin | Allen C. Montague, (Audubon Field Notes, Aug., 1957) R. Earl Olson | D. H. Morse D. H. Morse | Edgerton Poole | De Garmo Therrien Fernald | Southard Emery | Lawrence Hanneman | Mrs. Phillip L. Holden | Miss S. Wollaston | Tabers |
| Drach-Backen I | Date | AugOct. 1956 Oct. 9-28 Nov. 18 Nov. 21 Jan. 11 Feb. 7-April 6 | April 28–May 19 Dec. 9 | Feb. 24 March 30 | Nov. 22 Jan. 17 | Feb. 22 April 20 April 24 | Nov. 4 Dec. 28 | Sept. 26 Oct. 6-12 | Oct. 12 | Sept. 29 | Oct. 12 |
| | Locality | Connecticut New Canaan New Britain Glastonbury West Hartford New Britain | Illinois Chicago Rockford | Maine Androscoggin County Webster | Cumberland County Bridgton Gorham | Franklin County Coburn Gore Eustis Wilton | Kennebec County Augusta Farmingdale | Monhegan Island St. George | Pemaquid Point | Baldpate Mountain Piscatagnis County | Mount Katahdin |
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| Table 2 (Continued) | Observers | Emery Gamage Gamage Gamage Foss N. L. Davis N. L. Davis N. L. Davis N. L. Davis Ewers Ewers Ewers Ars. H. Cole Mr. and Mrs. John Day Craig Roberts, W. Byers Brian Harrington Mrs. Edwin S. Rand Craig Roberts R. Ames, et al. Ruth P. Emery C. DeWindt, E. Barry Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Gaffney i'de Ruth P. Emery Torrey Jackson, John B. Holt, Jr. C. DeWindt Oscar M. Root Mrs. Parker Mrs. Parker Mrs. Parker Mrs. Parker | R. Campbell Mrs. Standish Bourne T. R. Morse |
| TAB | Date | April 22 Nov. 14 Nov. 23 March 1 April 28 April 28 Oct. 19 Oct. 19 Oct. 13 Oct. 31 Nov. 19 Dec. 7 Jan. 27 Feb. 27 March 2 April 12 May 5 Oct. 6 Oct. 6 Oct. 6 Oct. 27 Oct. 23 | Mov. 15 Mid-Dec.–Jan. 27 Feb. 16 |
| | Map Reference No. | 9 Sagadahoc County Bath 10 Somerset County Brighton Pleasant Ridge Plt. Rockwood The Forks Moose River 11 Washington County South Addison MASSACHUSETTS 1 Essex County Haverhill Manchester Andover North Andover Magnolia North Andover Hamilton Rowley Newburyport Annisquam Newburyport Newburyport Newbury North Andover Newbury Lexington Hudson Winchester Hudson Winchester | Weston Concord |

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| | Framingham Weston Sherborn Lexington | Feb. 23 March March 24 April 6 April 23 | F. Cleason Jean Wittenberger Stephen Cribben Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Channing Mrs. A. H. Meyer | O+ O+O+ FI FI FI FI FI |
| ന | Norfolk County Wellesley Hills Needham Dover Wollaston Wellesley Milton Hyde Park | Oct. 14-Nov.25 Dec. Dec. 16-18 Feb. 11 March 13-20 April 13 Aug 10 1957 | Wayne Peterson, Mrs. P. L. Holden, K. Elkins John Willison Chas. C. Cabot, et al. Robert Fox Mrs. A. Edmands Sarah H. Wollaston | 0+0+0+ 0+0+0+ 0+0+0+ |
| 4 rv | Southeast Massachusetts Nantucket Cataumet Westport Berkley Western Massachusetts | Oct. 21 Oct. 27 Dec. 1 April 18 | John V. Dennis E. C. Johnson Norman Hill Mrs. Athearn, et al. | |
| 9 | Holyoke Northfield Mt. Tom Worcester County Portster | Dec. 30 Feb. 2 March 15 and 16 Oct. 31 Dec. 1 | Rudolph Stone Mr. and Mrs. David A. Pepperell S. A. Eliot, et al. (Audubon Field Notes, Aug., 1957) Mrs. Phillip B. Haywood Mr. and Mrs. Davis H. Crompton | |
| 7 7 7 | Paxton Barre Michican Luzern Marquette | Dec. 1 Dec. 9 Dec. 16 May 8 Nov. 19 Feb. 13 | Davis H. Crompton, David Miner Lloyd Jenkins, et al. Davis H. Crompton, David Miner Campbell L. M. Zimmerman Ed Wieland | 50 O+ O+ O+ T T T T T T T T T T T T T T T T T T T |

| | | Nest with young | | | | | | | | |
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| Table 2 (Continued) | Observers | Harold Mayfield of Michigan) | John Futcher | fide W. A. Squires (Nature News [N. B. Museum], 8[4]:2, July-Aug., 1957) | Ruby B. Emery, Priscilla Powers Ruby B. Emery Mr. and Mrs. Wm. F. Nickerson Miss F. Lawson | Mr. and Mrs. N. L. Hatch W. H. Stimson W. Patten Hill R. Hebert | F. W., et al., (Audubon Field Notes, Feb., 1957) | Dr. and Mrs. H. Axtell Clayton Knox Mr. G. Hilligh of al | Charles Summers T. Ucci, Gertrude Webster Walker, Gertrude Webster | Mrs. Milligan, Mrs. J. Bacon Robt. Saunders, et al. Belknap, A. W. Allen |
| T_{ℓ} | Date | May 31 the lower peninsul | May 4 | Early Nov. June 19 | Oct. 25–26 Dec. 2 Jan. 27 Feb. | Oct. 20 Oct. 21 Nov. 8–Dec. 20 March 1 | Oct. 22 | Oct. 20 Oct. 28 | Nov. 4 Nov. 24 Dec. 9 Dec. 16 | April 10 Oct. 11 Dec.–March 10 |
| | Locality | Kirtland's Warbler Country May 31 Harold Ma (First nesting record for the lower peninsula of Michigan) | Minnesota Winona | NEW BRUNSWICK Fredericton King's County | New Hampshire Northern New Hampshire Monroe Littleton Lancaster Pinkham Notch | Southern New Hampshirc Nottingham Hollis Peterboro New Hampton | New Jersey Culver's Gap | New York State Buffalo Region Wilson Letchworth Park | Olean Buffalo | Armor Chenango Valley State Park Clayton area |
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| 4 | Finger Lakes area Sapsucker Woods Pond | Mid-Jan. | David Allen | | |
| 1002 | Ithaca Keesville Mill Neck | Feb. 2 Dec. 8 Mid-Feb. | per Cornell Ornithology Laboratory T. A. Lesperance John Elliott | $\begin{matrix} 1 \\ 1 \\ (\text{specimen}) \\ 1 \\ \begin{matrix} \begin{matrix}$ | |
| ~ & | new 1 ork City area Bedford New Rochelle Rochester area | Oct. 20 April 28 | Douglas Orbison, <i>et al.</i> George Gorman | 11 | |
| | 1105 Monroe Ave. Scottsville | Nov. 18-April Nov. 23 | Stutz, Klonick, et al. O'Hara, Miller | 44,33 | |
| 6 | Summerville Drive Morville Drive Long Pond Woods Syracuse area | Dec. 30 Jan. 2–10 April 27 | Whites Leo Tanghe O'Hara, Miller | 100,100 | |
| | Ava Fayetteville Manlius Baldwinsville | Dec. 1 Dec. 30 Mid-Jan. Feb. 17-March 10 | A. Jones Walter Spoffard fide Mrs. R. Gould F. Scheider, Evans | <0 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | |
| 10 | Watervliet | Feb. 24 Dec. 22–Jan. 20 | Mr. and Mrs. J. Smith, et al. James Merritt | 10,2 | |
| J | Nova Scotia Brier Island | Early Sept. | Harrison F. Lewis | 1\$ (banded) | |
| 7 2 | Ontario Algonquin Park Bancroft area | Oct. 27 | J. L. Baillie, E. V. Stark, et al. | 1 | |
| ಣ | Paudash Lake McGarry's Creek Barrie area | Jan. 5 Jan. 13 Sept. 25 | D. E. Scovell D. E. Scovell Mrs. J. MacLean | O+ | |
| | | Nov. 9 May 13 May 18 | Mrs. J. L. Westman L. Whiting Mrs. E. S. Lewis, et al. | 0 | |

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| TAE | Date | Nov. 4 Dec. 29 Jan. 1 Jan. 12 Oct. 19 Oct. 26 Oct. 27 Early Nov. 11 Dec. 16 Dec. 23 Jan. 6 Feb. 10 Oct. 6-13 Dec. 26 Oct. 21-27 Nov. 17 Nov. 25 Dec. 16 Dec. 30 Dec. 16 Dec. 20 Lec. 20 Lec. 20 Lec. 20 Dec. 30 Dec. 20 Dec. 30 |
| | Locality | Brockville area Brighton Port Britain Port Britain Port Hope Rice Lake Presqu'ile Point Cobourg Port Hope Grafton Cobourg Commanda Fort William-Port Arthur Hamilton area Paradise Rd.—Hwy. #53 Strathearne Sewer Dundas Marsh Spencer's Creek Dundas Marsh Spencer's Creek Dundas Marsh Spencer's Creek Campbellville Mount Albion Sherman St. Clappison's Corners York Road Campbellville McKittrick's Bridge Freeman & Westdale Huntsville |
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| | Bedford Mills | Nov. 10 | A. Strong | O+ |
| r | Kingston | Dec. 16 | A. E. Garwood, W. Lamb | 000 |
| II | Kitchener | Nov. 17 | Margaret Lemon | + 0+ |
| 7.5 | Kirkland Lake | Christmas census | J. G. Stephenson | + |
| 13 | London | Dec. 2 | James Leach, et al. | 1 |
| 1 L | Orangeville area | Oct. 15 | Isobel Miller | 2 |
| CI | Uttawa area | rall 1950 | fide W. Earl Godfrey | Scveral |
| | | March I | D. B. O. Saville | П |
| 16 | 1 | April 4 | B. U. Saville | |
| 10 | Feterborough area | Oct. 28 | A. Bunker, F. R. Pammett, J. L. McKeever | 10 |
| | | Nov. 4 Nov. 10 | | 18,19 |
| | | Nov. 10 | n. n. baker p v p. l r p n n c n | 10,20 |
| | | Dec. 20 | n. n. baker, r. r. Fammett, U. Sadler P. V. Balton | Ω, |
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| | | April 21 | ے ہے |)+ * |
| 17 | Point Pelee | Oct. 27 | نتا ز | 7 |
| 18 | Rutherglen | Fall, 1956 | Louise de Kiriline Laurence | 1 6 |
| 19 | St. Williams | April 19 | Mr. and Mrs. R. Lloyd | 0 - |
| 20 | Toronto area | | | Ţ |
| | Willowdale | Oct. 4 | W. Wasserfall | 19 (handed) |
| | , | Oct. 11 | W. Wasserfall | 1 & (banded) |
| | Colborne Lodge | Oct. 14 | W. Higgins | |
| | Glen Major | Oct. 14 | Mrs. O. S. Mitchell | + |
| | Woodbridge | Oct. 14 | W. Williams | 16 |
| | Pottageville | Oct. 21 | L. L. Snyder | 1 |
| | Richmond Hill | Oct. 23 | Mrs. Curry | . [|
| | Finch Ave., North York | Oct. 24 | W. Williams | 13 |
| | Annlowed Apres | Oct. 2/ | R. M. Saunders | 1 |
| | Tawrence Ave F | Oct. 28 | J. Dales | |
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| Speir | S | Total Total Wood Horent Hit William | 303 |
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| Table 2 (Continued) | Observers | fide Abbé René Tanguay fide Abbé René Tanguay Henri Ouellet fide Abbé René Tanguay Jacques Normandin Louis Amédée Lord Paul Lebouet R. S. and P. C. Abbott Mrs. G. A. Golden Gercle Jeune Naturalistes Ronald LePage fide Abbé René Tanguay Gaston LePage Ronald LePage Ronald LePage Ronald LePage Ronald LePage Ronald Cayouette fide Abbé René Tanguay Abbé Paul Etienne Sirois, Lucien Robitaille Raymond Cayouette, et al. fide Abbé René Tanguay | Alan J. Rusch Carl H. Richter |
| | Date | Sept. 27 Oct. 12 May 16 March 13 Sept. 4–5 Oct. 18 Oct. 5 Nov. 7–April 23 Dec. 30 March 21 Sept. 8 Sept. 22 Oct. 5 Nov. 11 Nov. 11 Nov. 11 Nov. 13 Nov. 25 Dec. 29 March 20 March 20 Dec. 29 March 20 Dec. 28 Feb. 8 Oct. 21 | Nov. 25 Oct. 28 |
| | e Locality | Quebec Barriére Caribou Biencourt Dosquet Ilets Jeremie Lac Frontière Montreal region Montreal segion Montreal region Alouteal Senneville Hudson Heights Rigaud Quebec City region Quebec City Valcartier Quebec City Valcartier Quebec City St. Foy Valcartier Anotre Dame des Laurentides St. Fabien de Panet Ste. Felicité Temiscamingue Vermont Okemo Mountain | Jackson County Oconto County |
| | Map Reference No. | 1 2 8 4 5 9 C 8 6 0 1 1 | 1 2 |

126 Lakeshore road w., port credit, ontario; and r.r. #2, pickering, ontario, may 16, 1958